

The Halfway House (former tavern)  
Mt. Pleasant Avenue  
Hanover, Morris County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

The Halfway House (former tavern)  
Mt. Pleasant Avenue  
Hanover, Morris County, New Jersey

Owners and occupants: Mr. and Mrs. W. Everett Rowley

Date of Erection: About 1760

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Present Condition: Interior restored lately to approximate original condition

Number of Stories: One and one-half and garret, over cellar

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - stone masonry

Exterior walls - timber frame, clapboarded

Interior walls - frame partitions plastered;  
plaster ceilings lately removed to  
expose beaded edged beams as originally  
open

Chimneys - brick, built inside of gable end  
walls. Rebuilt above roof 1880-1925

Roof - gable, wood shingled; porch not  
original; 3 of 5 front (see photographs)  
dormer windows added since 1925

Stairway - modern replacement since 1925

Window sash - originals replaced 1860-1890  
by light sash which have been replaced  
since 1925 by replicas of originals

Historical Data:

Mr. W. Everett Rowley, who with Mrs. Rowley, owns and occupies this former tavern as a residence, writes under date of 6 November 1940 as follows. We purchased the "Halfway House" on Mt. Pleasant Avenue in Hanover, New Jersey, on September 18, 1925 and have resided there ever since that time. As to the name "Halfway House", the only authority which we have is common talk amongst

the people in the community, which is to the effect that the tavern was given this name largely because it was most commonly used by farmers and drovers from Western Morris County and Sussex County who stopped there overnight on their way to the Newark markets. Our neighbor, Mr. Edward Dixon, who was born in Hanover on April 20th, 1862, says that he remembers Mr. Charlee Hopping, who died about 1880, maintained a tavern in this house, but not the exact time that it ceased to be a tavern. It is a fair presumption that it was a tavern until about 1880. As to the signboard which bears the colonial eagle painted in gold on a dark blue background, we found this in 1925 in the attic of the "Halfway House". It was complete, including part of the iron bracket which suspends it, with the exception of one of the two equal size boards which compose the body of the sign. The board which was intact comprised one-half of the sign body and the design of the eagle clutching the arrows was still intact and entirely visible - that is, one-half of the design on each side of the board, so the two reverse halves of the design together provided the complete eagle design because the sign originally had the same design on both sides, each facing in different directions. My father-in-law, Mr. Leon S. Thornton, restored the sign by building in the missing board and by making a new side column to replace one which was badly decayed. He then had the design of the eagle carefully reproduced, the painter taking the same from the original board. As to the date 1786 which now appears at the top of the sign, these numerals were plainly legible on the sign as we found it, with the exception of the third figure, of which only a half circle of the top was visible. We had good circumstantial evidence for thinking that this dating was 1766, but decided to be conservative and gave it the benefit of doubt so inserted the numeral 8 to make 1786. This evidence consists chiefly of the fact that the nearby Ashbel Green house is authentically dated 1760, and the two houses are so identical in the detail of their construction that it is highly probable that the same artisans built both. I carefully examined the Ashbel Green house before it was reconstructed some few years ago. Of the three photographs obtained from us, the one showing the smallest porch was taken in 1925, the one

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with the full porch, presumably the original one, would seem to be about 1860-1870, and the one with the full width porch having a lowered roof about 1880-1890. (End quotation)

The design and details of this house indicate its erection possibly 30 years before 1794, on 23 October of which year the French financier Theophile Casenove described as follows his overnight stop at an inn, presumably this house. (quote) At Hanover 7 miles (from Chatham), stopped at Tapin's; pretty bad lodging. On approaching this village or district, the ground is better for cultivation and less suited for pasturage; the hills higher, the plains broader, the declivities gentler..... Mr. Patin (Tapin) the innkeeper paid 1450 for his 20 acre place; it is an inn formerly kept by Gray, and well frequented. N.B. an English Bible on the table under the mirror. 24 Oct. Friday, left Tapin's, Hanover, at 9 o'clock in the morning. Paid for the night 1l 4 sh. 8d. For the boy and maid 3sh.(a)

Search of title of the house here surveyed, further to identify it with the inn above mentioned, has been found possible only to the year 1805 and is reported as follows:

By deed of 10 January 1805, a certain George Prosser and wife Margaret of Hanover Township,

(a) Cazenover Journal 1794, translated and publ. by the Penna. Hist. Pres, Haverford, Pa., 1922, pp. 4, 5, & 88. No deed to "Tapin" (Tappen or Topping?) mentioned above as innkeeper in 1794 is found in the records of the Province which are now deposited in the Office of the Secretary of State nor in those of the County, and we have not been able to identify him.

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Morris County, conveyed to Samuel Merry<sup>(b)</sup> of same place, for \$1406.25, a 6½ acre lot having a frontage of some 590 feet on the northeast side of the "road from Newark to Morristown" and some 440 feet on the southeast side of the intersecting road to Hanover Neck, in the village of Hanover, on which lot stands and then stood the house here considered.

Samuel Merry Jr. who thus came into possession of the inn or tavern in Hanover, died 19 September 1821 in his 50th year, according to grave-stone inscription in the Presbyterian cemetery in the village, and administration upon his estate was granted 25 September next to Daniel Hopping. The real estate of Samuel Merry decd. as listed in an order for sale by the Orphans Court in 1823 comprised a 9 acre meadow lot on Passaic River at the east end of the village, a 40 acre lot called the "Old Homestead", and a 10 acre "Lot called the Tavern Lot on which stands a house and barn," adjoining lands of the Rev. Aaron Condict, John Clark and others.

(b) Samuel Merry Jr., b. 19 Jan. 1772, d. 19 Sept. 1821, bur. in Hanover chyd., mar. 29 Jan. 1795 Phoebe Burnet, b. 21 Nov. 1774, d. 23 Oct. 1841, dau. of Lindsley Burnet, and had issue: Lindsley B. 1797-1867; Maria 1799-1823 mar. Chas. Hopping; Eliza H. 1802-1859 of Crown Pt., Ind., wf. of Benj. Leek; Phebe 1804-1884 of Palestine, Ill., wf. of Reuben Harrison; William 1806-, d. in Cal.; Electa 1809-1856 of Columbia mo., wf. of John M. Willis; Joseph K. 1811-1834; Emeline 1813-1836, of Palestine, Ill., wf. of David Stuart; and Lauretta A. 1816, wf. of Ebenezer Condit. (Hist. of Presb. Ch. Morristown, part II, 156, publ. 1885). He was a son of Samuel Merry Sr., 1739-1799 who enlisted in Morris County Regiment of State Troops during the Revolution, by his wife Rachel, 1734-1814. (D.A.R. Lineage Book 126, p. 293). See also Inscriptions from Graveyards at Whippany and Hanover, Morris Co., N.J., publ. 1894, p. 66.

By deed of 26 March 1824, the administrator Daniel Hopping conveyed to Charles Hopping<sup>(c)</sup> of Hanover Township for \$860 a 4.79 acre lot having a frontage of 367 feet on the northeast side of the Turnpike road through the village of Hanover<sup>(d)</sup> bounded southeast by a lot of the Rev. Aaron Condit, northwest by one sold to Lindsley and Beach and by the road to Hanover Neck, and northeast by the land of John Cook, the lot thus conveyed being "known as the tavern lot", formerly composed of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  acres.

Having thus purchased the tavern from the estate of his late father-in-law in 1824, Charles Hopping held the same and occupied it at the time of his death<sup>(e)</sup>. By his will of 26 July 1873, proved 19 June 1880, after devising to his son William H.

(c) Charles Hopping (1795-1877) son of John and Elizabeth (Luker) Hopping of Afton (now part of the borough of Florham Park) Morris County, was blacksmith in Hanover for some years and also kept a hotel for a time, later farming. He was a member of the local militia and was drafted for service in the War of 1812. He married 1st, 18 Oct. 1817 Mary Merry (1799-1823) daughter of Samuel Merry Jr. (1772-1821) named above as late owner of the tavern, and his wife Phoebe Burnett (1774-1828), and had issue: Luther, Amanda E. and Samuel M. By his 2nd wife Mary Parker, Charles Hopping had issue: Ann M., Margaret D., Mary N., Susan E., Emma and William H. (Biogr. & Genealog. Hist. of Morris Co., N.J., The Lewis Publ. Co., 1899, 2 vols., vol. II, 452 and 480)

(d) Hanover, post town of Hanover township, on the turnpike road from Newark to Milford, 7 miles E. from Morristown.....contains a Presbyterian church and half a dozen dwellings situate on the plain near the bank of the Passaic. (Thos. F. Gordon, Gazetteer of the State of New Jersey, 1834, p. 156)

(e) Map of Hanover village, plate 14 of Beers' Atlas of Morris Co., 1868, shows this house marked "Chas. Hopping", the first west from Passaic River, on the northeast side of the turnpike, with a blacksmith shop third building above his and above the fourth the road to Hanover Neck. A total of 22 buildings appear, including the church, school, store and wagon shop, but the tavern is not marked as such.

the part of the "homestead farm lying on the southerly side of the public road leading through the village of Hanover.....on which I am now building a new dwelling house and other improvements for the use of my said son," he empowered his executors to sell the balance of his real estate, allowing his wife Mary G. Hopping the use thereof meanwhile. The balance included the house here surveyed.

Accordingly, by deed of 1st March 1881, Samuel M. Hopping, executor above mentioned, conveyed to testator's daughter Susan Hopping of the village of Hanover, for \$1650, the same "tavern lot" which he had acquired in 1824 as cited supra. The grantee Susan Hopping died 13 January 1907, unmarried, in Hanover Township and supposedly in this house, having devised all her real estate to her nephew George B. Hopping of Orange, New Jersey, son of William H., by her will of 8 February 1906. This devisee sold the house, being the former tavern lot in Hanover, to Frank A. Moger and wife of East Orange, New Jersey, by deed of 5 April 1915, and they passed it to Henry F. Starr and wife of Essex Fells, N. J., on 1st February 1919, who in turn conveyed the same to W. Everett Rowley of Jersey City, on 18 September 1925. The last named remains as owner and occupant of this former public house at the time of our survey thereof in October 1940, and is responsible for the restorations of the interior and the reerection of the tavern signboard as shown in the photographs.

Reference: Search of title in the land and probate records of Morris County by James Hanlon, H.A.B.S. abstractor reported 30 October 1940

*Lewis D. Cook*

Supervising Historian

Approved:

*Seymour Williams*

SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.  
District Officer